

King's Children.

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CHAPTER V.

THE OPENING OF DOORS: INDIA. We now take up an extended study of what was outlined and prefaced in chapter I, viz., that the providence of God is especially apparent in the work of missions, in the opening of doors—great and effectual; and in so doing says our author, we naturally begin with India, for when God entered that land with Christian missions he was driving an entering wedge into the very heart, geographical and moral of oriental paganism.

A short study of the country will not be without profit.

(1.) Its geography. The easternmost country of Asia known to the ancients. Boundaries: North, Chinese Empire; east, Burmah, Siam, Bengal Bay; south, Indian Ocean; west, Beloochistan, Afghanistan, Arabian sea. Extent: Eighteen hundred miles from north to south. Fifteen hundred miles from east to west. Area: One million four hundred thousand square miles. Population: Two hundred and fifty millions.

The people are sometimes called "Indians" from the name "India" which at one time included all the land between China and the Arabian sea; but most frequently "Hindoos," a name which the Greeks derived from the Persians, and which has passed into modern language. The Ancient native name was Arya, from whence Aryan, meaning "honorable men."

This name however was assumed only by the three higher castes of India to distinguish them as the observers of the sacred laws from the Mlekha, or despisers of the law. They belong to the Caucasian race and form the most eastern branch of the great Indo Germanic family of nations. India has been described as a land of mystery, of unintelligible systems of beliefs, of puzzling incongruities and irreconcilable contradictions.

It has attracted many of the world's great conquerors and has been over-run and subdued by the armies of Darius Hystaspes, Alexander the Great, Zingis Khan, Lord Clive and Sir Arthur Wellesley.

The Aryans are possessed of great natural talents—a fine mental organization and have developed a very remarkable and peculiar civilization. Their intellectual activity and religious beliefs were not confined to India alone, but even China ever so impatient and jealous of foreign influences received the religion of the majority

of its inhabitants from India. Notwithstanding the extreme antiquity of Aryan literature, it sheds no light upon the early history of the race. With them, as with others, their history begun in legends, and the Epic predominated. But in India the period of the Epic was not followed as in Greece, by one of historical narrative or factual history.

But the study of languages, or comparative philology has come to our aid. The vast body of Hindoo literature was unknown until a century ago, when Sir Wm. Jones introduced it by his translations of the laws of *Manu*, extracts from the Vedas etc., into English.

We now know that the Aryan or Hindoo, was but one of the seven races which formed the great Indo-European, the race which has done most of the world.

The home of these races must have been somewhere in Central Asia, most probably in the region of Bactria, from whence the Aryans, or Hindoos, or Indians migrated south-eastwardly, crossed the Indus river, and settled in the Hindoo peninsula, conquering and inter-mingling with a darker skinned race already there.

About this time, according to St. Martin, was written the last hymn of the Vedas; and that the conquered darker race became the Sudras, of which there were four, viz., (1.) The Priests or Brahmins. (2.) The Warriors or Kshatriyas. (3.) The Tradesmen or Vaisyas. (4.) The Slaves or Sudras.

According to Hindoo mythology, these four classes sprung from Brahma, the supreme god; the Priests having sprung from his mouth, the Warriors from his arms, the Merchants from his loins and the Slaves from his feet.

Three religious systems have had their origin in India: Hinduism or Brahminism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism or Islamism.

The first of these deserves much study. Says Dr. J. Murray Mitchell: "The Christian ought not to rest satisfied with the vague general idea that Hinduism is a form of heathenism, with which he has nothing to do save to help in destroying it. Let him try to realize the ideas of the Hindu regarding God, the soul, sin, salvation, heaven, hell, and the many sore trials of this mortal life. He will then certainly have a much more vivid perception of the divine origin and transcendent importance of his own religion."

Our knowledge of this religion must be drawn from the *Veda*, which word signifies divinely revealed knowledge and consists of four books:

First. The Rig-Veda or Veda of Praise.

Second. The Sama Veda or Veda of Chants and Liturgies.

Third. The Yajur Veda or Veda of Sacrifice.

Fourth. The Atharva Veda or Veda of History.

The following points of interest regarding these Vedas were drawn from various sources.

(1.) The hymns are of a strongly religious character.

(2.) That they are a *selection* rather than a *collection*, made by priestly hands for priestly purposes. Says Barth, "They are pre-eminently sacerdotal and in no sense popular."

(3.) "They are artificial, elaborate, over-refined and even affected."—*Mitchell*.

(4.) They present only the religious thought of the Hindus.

5. "The prevailing aspect of the religion presented in them may be broadly designated as nature worship."—*Mitchell*.

(6.) Their deities are "The Bright Ones" and none has fuller worship paid him than Agni, the fire. More hymns are dedicated to him than any other, and is fed with pure clarified butter.

(7.) Soma is also an highly exalted God. The word is the name of a juice, which when fermented is intoxicating. The Aryans being delighted with its effects and they make it a god.

(8.) The Holiest Prayer. "Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the Divine Son (or Vivifier;) may he enlighten our understanding!"

(9.) Human sacrifice was not unknown, tho there are very few allusions to it in the earlier hymns."—*Mitchell*.

(10.) Sacrifice was deemed as of very high importance. It was believed to be expiatory; it removed sin; it was substitutionary; the victim stood in place of the offerer.

Many other things of importance might be noted, but we cannot in this outline. For a fuller account we would recommend the following books:

1. Two Old Faiths,—Mitchell and Muir.

2. Ten Great Religions,—Jas. Freeman Clarke.

Buddhism arose as a reaction against Brahminism in the fifth century, B. C.

The people were priest ridden. "Never was priestly tyranny more absolute; the proudest pope in mediaeval times never lorded it over western Christendom with such un-renting vigor."

The priest could breathe the spell which made earth and heaven and hell tremble.

Religious ceremonies were multiplied; ritual became the very soul of worship; sacrifices became more protracted, expensive and bloody; a hecatomb of victims was only a small offering.

Just at this time Buddha appeared with